



# Community Health Advisory

July 25th, 2025



## Alert Categories



### Community Health Alert

Conveys the highest level of importance;  
**warrants immediate action or attention.**



### Community Health Advisory

Provides important information for a  
specific incident or situation; **may not require  
immediate action.**



### Community Health Update

Provides updated information regarding  
an incident or situation; **no immediate  
action necessary.**

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Whooping Cough (Pertussis) Activity in Whitman County

Questions regarding this information may be directed to:

**Whitman County Public Health** | Disease Prevention Program | [DiseasePrevention@whitmancounty.gov](mailto:DiseasePrevention@whitmancounty.gov)

## Summary

As of July 23, 2025, Whitman County Public Health (WCPH) is investigating two **epi-linked** pertussis cases, which puts Whitman County back in outbreak status, ending over 3 months of non-outbreak status.

**Epi-linked** means people got sick from the same source or exposure. For example, if several people who got sick all attended the same event or had contact with the same infected person, they are considered epidemiologically linked, or epi-linked.

## Requested Actions

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1. Be aware of whooping cough (pertussis) potentially circulating in the community.
  - Encourage individuals who have been diagnosed with pertussis to reach out to Whitman County Public Health at 509-332-6752.
2. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have been in **close contact** with someone diagnosed with pertussis. You are considered a **close contact** of someone with pertussis if:
  - You live in the same household as someone with pertussis.
  - You spent many hours together while they were symptomatic (e.g.: cough, runny nose, low-grade fever, etc.). This could include being in the same room, household, or a confined space like a car.
  - You had direct contact with respiratory droplets, such as coughing, sneezing, kissing, or sharing utensils with the infected person.
3. Make sure you are up to date with your pertussis immunization (DTaP, Tdap).
  - For more information on what it means to be up to date, see the "**Pertussis Immunization**" section below.
4. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands often with soap and water.
5. Stay home when sick and limit your exposure to people who are sick. Being sick with whooping cough may begin like a common cold, but unlike a cold, the coughing can last for weeks or months.

## What is Pertussis?

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Pertussis (whooping cough) is a well-known and serious respiratory illness caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*.

## How is Pertussis Spread?

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Person-to-person spread of pertussis occurs through small drops of spit from your mouth or nose when you talk, cough, or sneeze. Spread is most likely among people who live together or people who spend time together indoors.

## What are the Symptoms of Pertussis?

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It begins with cold-like symptoms and develops into a bad cough.

Coughing spells can be severe, sometimes ending in gagging or vomiting. Some kids also may have a high-pitched "whoop" after they cough, which is how the disease got its common name. However, infants may not cough at all, and some teens and adults don't have a "whoop" after they cough.

Complications of pertussis include pneumonia, syncope (passing out), seizures, apnea (stopping breathing), and death. Severe complications are most common in infants.

## Who Is at Risk?

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People at high risk for severe illness from pertussis:

- Infants under 1 year old are at greatest risk for severe disease and death
- People with pre-existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by pertussis

Those who will have contact with people at high risk:

- Pregnant women in third trimester: Women in their third trimester of pregnancy may be a source of pertussis to their newborn infant.
- All people in high-risk settings: This is focused in particular on settings that include infants under 12 months of age or women in their third trimester of pregnancy. These settings can include neonatal intensive care units, childcare settings, and maternity wards.

## Pertussis Testing

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There are tests available for Pertussis. PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) testing is currently the preferred test method for pertussis.

However, a negative test does not mean a person should stop treatment. The full prescription should be taken as directed by your care provider.

## Pertussis Treatment

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If pertussis is diagnosed, early treatment with antibiotics can reduce the spread of the disease to others. Close contacts of someone with pertussis may also be prescribed preventive antibiotics.

Diagnosed individuals should isolate until they have completed at least 5 days of antibiotic treatment or stay home for 21 days after the onset of symptoms to avoid spreading the infection.

## Pertussis Immunization

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Immunization is the most effective way to prevent pertussis.

- DTaP Immunization: For infants and young children, this vaccine is given in a series of five doses (at 2, 4, 6, 15–18 months, and 4–6 years).
- Tdap Immunization: Adolescents (11–12 years old) should receive the Tdap immunization, which provides continued protection against pertussis. If you never received a Tdap booster as an adolescent, a single dose is recommended for adults.
- Pregnancy Vaccination: Pregnant women are advised to receive the Tdap vaccine during the third trimester (between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy) for every pregnancy to protect newborns before they can receive their vaccinations.

Pertussis vaccines are effective, but not perfect. They typically offer good levels of protection within the first two years after getting the vaccine, but protection wanes over time. In general, DTaP vaccines are 80% to 90% effective.